

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 TRSE-00
EB-08 OPR-02 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 SY-05 USSS-00
MCT-01 DHA-02 /080 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 550

INFO AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2891

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY

PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL CONFRONTATION HAS NOW ENTERED A NEW PHASE. BHUTTO HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE IS PREPARED TO PURSUE REPRESSIVE MEASURES, OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD IF NECESSARY, TO BREAK THE PNA'S "MOVEMENT" AND TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF IN POWER. HIS FOES HAVE MAINTAINED THEIR UNITY IN CALLING FOR A HARD LINE. OPINIONS VARY AS TO HOW LONG THE PNA CAN SUSTAIN ITS CONFRONTATION WITH MOST OF ITS LEADERS AND MANY OF ITS ACTIVISTS IN DETENTION. THE PUNJAB IS THE CRUCIAL REGION IN WHICH THE CONFRONTATION WILL BE PLAYED OUT. TODAY'S HARTAL CALL WILL PROVIDE FURTHER BUT
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NOT CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE ABOUT THE PNA'S ABILITY TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT. THERE IS INTENSE SPECULATION ABOUT THE EVENTUAL ROLE OF THE ARMY. WE BELIEVE MANY PNA LEADERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THEIR HOPE OF OVERTHROWING BHUTTO RESTS IN MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE ARE RELUCTANT TO MAKE A FORECAST ABOUT THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME OF THE CONFRONTATION. WE BELIEVE THAT IF THE PM DOES GET THROUGH HIS PRESENT DIFFICULTIES, THAT WILL NOT ASSURE SMOOTH SAILING

IN THE FUTURE. HIS STYLE OF GOVERNING IS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED,
AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION AS IT EXISTED BEFORE THE ELECTIONS
WHEN BHUTTO ENJOYED A CLEAR MANDATE CANNOT BE RESTORED.
END SUMMARY

1. AS THE EMBASSY'S REPORT (ISLAMABAD 2868) YESTERDAY SUGGESTS,
AND OUR SITREP THIS MORNING UNDERSCORES, THE CONFRONTATION BE-
TWEEN THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT AND ITS OPPONENTS HAS NOW ENTERED A
NEW PHASE. PROSPECTS FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, NEVER
MORE THAN MINIMAL, HAVE NOW DISAPPEARED ALTHOGETHER. BHUTTO HAS
MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE IS PREPARED TO PURSUE REPRESSIVE MEASURES,
OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD IF NECESSARY, TO BREAK THE PNA'S "
MOVEMENT" AND TO MAINTAIN HIMSELF IN POWER. HE HAS ARRESTED ALMOST
ALL MAJOR PNA LEADERS, AND IT SEEMS REASONABLY CLEAR THAT THIS
TIME THEIR CONFINEMENTS WILL NOT BE LIMITED TO THE FEW HOURS OR
DAYS THEY WERE BEHIND BARS LAST WEEK. FURTHER EVIDENCE OF BHUTTO'S
DETERMINATION TO TOUGH IT OUT IS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ARMY
IN AID OF CIVIL AUTHORITY IN HYDERABAD, FOLLOWING ITS EMPLOYMENT
IN KARACHI, AND HIS EVIDENT WILLINGNESS TO USE IT ELSEWHERE
AS NECESSARY.

2. THE PNA. THE PNA ALSO GIVES EVERY EVIDENCE OF MAINTAINING
THE CONFRONTATION IT INITIATED SOON AFTER THE MARCH 7
ELECTIONS. IT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL CARRY ON ITS COUNTRY-
WIDE HARTAL PROGRAM TODAY DESPITE THE ARRESTS OF ITS LEADERS. WE
WOULD EXPECT THAT WHATEVER DEGREE OF SUCCESS THIS WINS, THE
ALLIANCE WILL CONTINUE TO PERSIST IN DEFYING THE GOVERNMENT
THROUGH PROCESSIONS AND PERHAPS MORE VIOLENT METHODS. ITS
RECOGNITION THAT ANY MODERATION OF ITS POSITION WILL DAMAGE ITS
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EFFORTS HAS PROBABLY BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THE ARREST OF ITS
LEADERS. ASIDE FROM THE STRAYING ALLIANCE GENERAL SECRETARY, WHO
WAS PERSUADED TO SEE BHUTTO AND WAS PROMPTLY THROWN OUT OF THE
PNA FOR THIS, THESE LEADERS HAVE REMAINED REMARKABLY UNITED
DESPITE BLANDISHMENTS REPORTEDLY OFFERED TO INDIVIDUALS THE PM
APPARENTLY FELT COULD BE BROUGHT AROUND. WHATEVER DOVISH SENT-
IMENTS ANY OF THE LEADERS MAY HARBOR HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN EFFECT-
IVELY RESORAINED BY THE FIRM, NO-COMPROMISE VIEWS TAKEN BY
ALLIANCE HAWKS. THIS HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY AN APPRECIATION ALL
IN THE PNA HIGH COMMAND SEEM TO SHARE THAT PUBLIC OPINION,
AROUSED BY THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS, IS SUCH THAT A HARD
LINE IS CALLED FOR. (THE INDIAN ELECTIONS, WHICH CONTRASTED SO
MARKEDLY IN CONDUCT AND OUTCOME WITH THE PAKISTAN BALLOTING,
HAVE ALMOST CERTAINLY HEIGHTENED THE SENSE OF BITTERNESS AND
OUTRAGE WIDELY FELT HERE ABOUT THE EVENTS OF MARCH 7.)

3. THE KEY QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS WHETHER AND FOR HOW LONG
THE PNA CAN SUSTAIN ITS CONFRONTATION. LARGE NUMBERS OF ITS
ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN ROUNDED UP SINCE THE MOVEMENT WAS INITIATED

ON MARCH 14, AND THE TOP LEADERS WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS ARE NOW BEHIND BARS. ASSESSMENTS OF OBSERVERS WE HAVE TALKED TO HERE AND IN KARACHI AND LAHORE ARE OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCED BY THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS. PRO-PPP SOURCES STRESS THAT MOUNTING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR TRADERS AND LABORERS TO SUPPORT A CONFRONTATION, AND MAINTAIN THAT THIS WILL PROBABLY PETER OUT. THOSE FAVORABLE TO THE PNA RECALL 1968-69, WHEN THE AGITATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST AYUB KHAN WAS SUSTAINED FOR A FOUR MONTH STRETCH LEADING TO HIS RETIREMENT. THERE IS OBVIOUSLY NO CERTAIN ANSWER, AND IT IS BY NO MEANS SURE THAT THOSE WHO GIVE US THEIR OFTEN BIASED ASSESSMENTS REALLY BELIEVE THEM.

4. THE PUNJAB IS CLEARLY THE CRUCIAL REGION IN WHICH THE CONFRONTATION WILL BE PLAYED OUT. THIS IS THE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL HEARTLAND OF PAKISTAN, WHERE GOVERNMENTS ARE MADE AND BROKEN. KARACHI, AS EVEN ITS STAUNCHEST RESIDENTS RUEFULLY RECOGNIZE, IS ESSENTIALLY A SIDESHOW. TRADITIONALLY VOLATILE AND OPPOSITIONIST, CONFIDENTIAL

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ITS ULTIMATE IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENTS IS LINKED TO COME MORE FROM THE INFLUENCE AN ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN IN THE CITY WILL HAVE ON THE PAKISTAN ECONOMY GENERALLY THAN FROM ITS DIRECT POLITICAL INPUT.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 TRSE-00
EB-08 OPR-02 A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 SY-05 USSS-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 551

INFO AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHGAN PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2891

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FRONTIER, WHILE IMPORTANT, ARE ALSO LIKELY TO BE SECONDARY TO THOSE IN THE PUNJAB. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, NWFP HAS BEEN QUIET SINCE THE PNA BEGAN ITS MOVEMENT. PROCESSIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT IN MANY TOWNS, BUT THESE HAVE GENERALLY DISPERSED PEACEFULLY AND HAVE EVIDENTLY BEEN DEALT WITH GENTLY BY THE AUTHORITIES. BEGUM WALI KHAN HAS REPORTEDLY CALLED ON THE FRONTIER TO REMAIN CALM, AND ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT HAS IT THAT THE PNA RECOGNIZES THAT OUTBURSTS IN THE PROVINCE COULD BE LABELLED ANTI-NATIONAL BY THE GOVERNMENT AND COULD BE USED TO TURN THE MUCH MORE VITAL PUNJAB AGAINST THE ALLIANCE.

5. TO DATE, VIOLENCE IN THE PUNJAB HAS BEEN LIMITED. INITIALLY PEACEFUL PROCESSIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT REPEATEDLY, THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE BUT WITH SOME NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS THESE HAVE NOT
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INVOLVED LARGE NUMBERS OR LED TO SERIOUSLY VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS. IN LAHORE, THE PNA HAS GENERALLY CONFINED ITS ACTIVITIES TO ONE OR TWO PROCESSIONS A DAY, ADVERTIZED IN ADVANCE AND CONTAINED BY THE AUTHORITIES USUALLY WITHIN A FEW HOURS. MORE SERIOUS CONFRONTATIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN MULTAN, AND INDUSTRIAL LYALLPUR HAS ALSO BEEN A TROUBLE SPOT. PINDI, WHICH PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE 1968-69 ANTI-AYUB MOVEMENT, HAS BY CONTRAST BEEN MUCH CALMER.

6. TODAY'S HARTAL CALL WILL PROVIDE FURTHER EVIDENCE ABOUT THE PNA'S ABILITY TO MOBILIZE SUPPORT, BUT LIKE EARLIER HARTAL APPEALS WILL NOT BE CONCLUSIVE. A MUCH MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION THAN THE PERCENTAGE OF SHOPS WHICH CLOSE WILL BE THE AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE WHICH TAKES PLACE. AS WE ARE REPORTING IN SEPTEL, THE ARMY HAS ALREADY BEGUN PATROLLING IN MULTAN AND IS ON HAND FOR SIMILAR DUTY IN LAHORE SHOULD THE SECURITY SITUATION THERE WORSEN.

7. THERE IS, OF COURSE, INTENSE SPECULATION ABOUT THE EVENTUAL ROLE OF THE ARMY. WE BELIEVE THAT MANY PNA LEADERS BELIEVE THAT THEIR HOPE OF OVERTHROWING BHUTTO RESTS WITH THE MILITARY, WHICH THEY THINK WILL BE UNWILLING TO PROP UP A DISCREDITED BHUTTO REGIME FOR LONG IF THAT CAN ONLY BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ARMY'S ASSUMING A MAJOR ROLE IN MAINTAINING INTERNAL SECURITY. IN SHORT, THEY ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE EVENTS OF 1969, WHEN THE ARMY WITHDREW ITS SUPPORT FOR THE AYUB REGIME, WILL BE REPEATED. THEY WOULD OF COURSE WISH AND EXPECT THAT THE MILITARY'S ROLE

ONCE BHUTTO IS REMOVED WOULD BE MUCH MORE LIMITED THAN IT WAS THEN, WHEN FRESH ELECTIONS FOR A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT WERE NOT HELD FOR 21 MONTHS.) OUR OWN VIEW CONTINUES TO BE THAT THE PAK MILITARY IS BASICALLY SATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT REGIME, AND WILL BE RELUCTANT TO ASSUME AGAIN THE POLITICAL ROLE IT LAST PLAYED SO BADLY IN 1971. THE FACT THAT THE ARMY LEADERSHIP IS DIVIDED BETWEEN THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE AND THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, THE LATTER CONSIDERED A BHUTTO MAN, APPEARS TO MAKE AN ACTIVE ARMY POLITICAL ROLE LESS LIKELY. YET IT IS STATING THE OBVIOUS TO SAY THAT SHOULD THE
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ARMY BE CALLED ON REPEATEDLY TO SHOOT DOWN TROUBLEMAKERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE SAME PUNJABI ORIGIN AS MOST OF THE MILITARY ITSELF, TO KEEP BHUTTO IN OFFICE, IT WILL HAVE TO RE-EXAMINE ITS POSITION. IN DOING SO IT WILL ALSO BE INFLUENCED BY ITS AWARENESS THAT A WELL-PUBLICIZED ROLE IN MAINTAINING ORDER IN THE STREETS, IF THIS INCLUDED REPRESSIVE ACTION, COULD REVIE THE ARMY'S 1971 REPUTATION FOR RUTHLESSNESS AGAINST CIVILIANS.

8. HOW WILL THE PRESENT CONFRONTATION END? WE HAVE REPORTED THAT OPINIONS DIVERGE WIDELY, AND THIS CONTINUES TO BE THE CASE. MANY ARE RELUCTANT TO MAKE A FORECAST, A POSITION WE SHARE. BUT WE BELIEVE THAT MOST OBSERVERS, INCLUDING BHUTTO SUPPORTERS, WOULD SUBSCRIBE TO OUR VIEW THAT IF THE PM DOES WEATHER THIS CONFRONTATION THIS WILL NOT NECESSARILY MEAN SMOOTH SAILING AFTERWARDS. IN AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH LARGE SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION DENY THAT BHUTTO HAS A LEGITIMATE MANDATE, FURTHER EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY CHALLENGES CANNOT BE RULED OUT. THIS ABSENCE OF A CLEAR MANDATZ IS ALSO LIKELY SIGNIFICANTLY TO INFLUENCE BHUTTO'S STYLE OF GOVERNMENT. IN SHORT, THE POLITICAL SITUATION AS IT EXISTED BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS CANNOT BE RESTORED, AND THE PAKISTAN SCENE IS LIKELY TO LOOK SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERNT IN BHUTTO'S SECOND TERM IN OFFICE.
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Message Attributes

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SAS ID: 2987364
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL SITUATION SUMMARY PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL CONFRONTATION HAS NOW ENTERED
TAGS: PINT, PK
To: STATE
Type: TE
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